Pollution Prevention Award winners to be honored

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Radiological control technicians operate the AIL GammaCam to look for spent-fuel fragments in the F Reactor Fuel Storage Basin. The GammaCam is one of the instruments used to make up the Advanced Characterization System, which was awarded a Pollution Prevention Award from DOE.

Four teams comprising more than 80 Environmental Restoration Contractor employees will be recognized by the U.S. Department of Energy at a ceremony later this spring for winning four 2003 DOE national Pollution Prevention Awards.

The employees won three awards for Hanford and joined with the DOE Oak Ridge Office of Assets Utilization to win a fourth. The awards recognize the use of materials, processes and practices that reduce or eliminate pollutants, contaminants, hazardous substances and wastes being generated and released to the environment at DOE sites.

"Pollution prevention is DOE's preferred approach to environmental restoration," said Oscar Holgado, manager of the Pollution Prevention Program for the DOE Richland Operations Office. "The ERC team members' efforts are being recognized for significantly contributing to our goal of accelerating Hanford cleanup while minimizing the generation of new wastes. The award with Oak Ridge recognizes their efforts to support homeland defense."

Innovative program

The ERC Pollution Prevention and Waste Minimization Program won the 2003 award in the Environmental Management Systems category. This category honors the most effective and innovative programs for environmental management at federal facilities. Bechtel Hanford leads the ERC team, which includes preselected subcontractors CH2M HILL Hanford and Eberline Services Hanford. The team manages Hanford's Environmental Restoration Project for DOE.

"We are being cited specifically for our ability to enhance pollution prevention and waste minimization by integrating creative approaches such as value engineering, partnering with regulators to streamline cleanup, and developing technology to accelerate cleanup," said Doug DuVon, coordinator of Bechtel Hanford's Pollution Prevention and Waste Minimization programs.

The award is for an innovative approach that eliminated the need to dispose of more than 300,000 tons of material, and helped avoid nearly $18 million in costs.

New procurement software

The ERC team received an award in the Affirmative Procurement category for a new software program called P-Card Solutions. The category recognizes the most effective and innovative programs used for ordering products made with recycled or recovered materials.

"Our team worked with a locally owned small business to create a customized program that includes all EPA-approved products," DuVon said. Using the new system, the ERC team purchased more than $112,000 worth of products containing recycled or recovered materials in fiscal year 2002, achieving the ERC's 100-percent goal for procuring products in the federally designated categories.

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Advanced Characterization

The Advanced Characterization System, or ACS, earned an award in the Return On Investment category. This category honors an outstanding example of an investment of DOE resources that is returning significant benefits in the form of waste reduction or cost savings.

The ACS has been used on the cocooning of D and H Reactors. It was designed as an alternative to core sampling, which generates waste, is labor intensive and requires expensive laboratory analysis. “The system integrates three off-the-shelf products that together provide faster detection and characterization of potentially contaminated concrete,” DuVon said. “It reduces worker exposure by using hands-off equipment design and minimizing the amount of low-level radioactive waste generated.

“At D Reactor, the four-person team determined in six weeks that two-thirds of D Reactor was not radioactive, which eliminated the need for special work or radiological controls,” DuVon explained. “A survey of that size normally would take a 15-member crew several months to complete. The survey at H Reactor took only three weeks. In addition to reducing the amount of radioactive waste for disposal, the project was completed several months ahead of schedule at a cost savings of $728,000.”

Homeland defense program

The ERC team’s efforts to support DOE’s Homeland Defense Equipment Reuse Program were recognized in the Model Facility Demonstrations/Complex-Wide category. This award category honors achievements for outstanding contributions to waste prevention, recycling and affirmative procurement.

As part of the program, the ERC team has provided more than 800 outdated chemical detection tubes and unneeded radiological detection equipment. The equipment is being distributed to police, fire, rescue and other emergency responders across the nation. The tubes are being used to help train emergency preparedness workers for responding to possible terrorist attacks. The tubes generally are used in industrial hygiene activities at Hanford to detect nearly 40 different chemicals such as ammonia or carbon dioxide.

Winning entries in DOE’s National Pollution Prevention Award Program, including the four received by the ERC team, have been forwarded to the White House for consideration in the annual Closing the Circle Awards.

DOE and Hanford contractors submitted a total of 10 entries for the 2003 awards. The entries included four from Bechtel Hanford, four from Fluor Hanford, one from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and one from the Hanford Site Pollution Prevention Team. ■